

MEMO

DATE: December 14, 2006
TO: Energy and Environment Committee (EEC)
FROM: Jacob Lieb, Program Manager, (213) 236-1921, lieb@scag.ca.gov
SUBJECT: 2007 Regional Transportation Plan Program Environmental Impact Report Approach

BACKGROUND:

For each update of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), SCAG prepares a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). At this time, staff is seeking input and discussion on a preliminary approach for the PEIR.

In brief, requirements for the PEIR for a plan of this type include:

- A project description,
- A range of reasonable alternatives,
- An identification and analysis of the impacts on the environment for each alternative,
- Identification of feasible mitigation for environmental impacts.

Preliminary discussions for the 2007 RTP PEIR have raised issues that may warrant special attention in the preparation and presentation of environmental review. Of note, participants in the October 5, 2006 Joint Policy Workshop on the Regional Comprehensive Plan expressed interest in energy supply issues being a major feature of the document.

At this stage, SCAG staff is forwarding basic approach and assumptions under consideration for the PEIR and soliciting input from the Energy and Environment Committee. Staff will seek action on a more specific proposal at a future meeting.

Project Description:

As discussed in prior meetings, staff may prepare a single PEIR for both RTP and the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP). This decision will affect how the project is defined. In broad terms, the project description will describe a plan that guides future urban form and the infrastructure and systems that support that urban form. In other words, the plans (or plans) will be about growth and development, and how transportation infrastructure, water, energy, waste management and other systems can work in concert to manage that growth. The project description will encapsulate the major policy direction of SCAG's planning efforts – compact and mixed-use development in strategic locations, balancing jobs and housing, and targeted improvements to transportation infrastructure.

Alternatives:

The selection of alternatives is a key step in creating a meaningful environmental document. As such, SCAG should endeavor to devise a set of alternatives that encompasses the potential policy options for the Regional Council's consideration. Staff, at this time, envisions a set of alternatives that will include the following:

- The proposed plan (either the RTP, or the combined RTP/RCP)
- More intensive urbanization and transit expansion than envisioned in the plan
- Public comment or other alternative to be determined
- No project alternative (extrapolated regional urban form from existing local plans)

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Impact Analysis:

As described above, SCAG will identify significant impacts on the environment as required by law. However, SCAG can place particular emphasis in this analysis on areas of interest to the EEC and the Regional Council. As such, staff proposes to measure the energy supply and demand impacts associated with assumptions and activities in the RTP and RCP, such that the energy performance of alternatives can be weighed in decisions. A consultant engaged as part of the RCP process will contribute to this analysis.

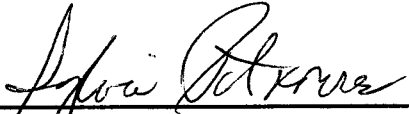
Mitigation:

Staff plans to build off the mitigation program crafted for the 2004 RTP PEIR. As such, staff has begun a process of consulting with interested stakeholders to receive input on existing mitigation measures and suggestions for how they might be strengthened. Further, the RCP will identify resources intended to implement mitigation for the RTP and RCP as well as for consistent plans adopted by regional, sub-regional, and local partners.

FISCAL IMPACT:

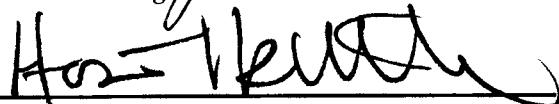
Staff work performed in preparation for the 2007 RTP Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) is included in the Overall Work Program (07-020.scgs1)

Reviewed
by:



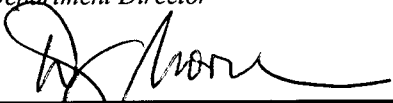
Division Manager

Reviewed
by:



Department Director

Reviewed
by:



Chief Financial Officer